



Department of Justice

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SOUTH VALLEY DRUG TRAFFICKERS INDICTED

FRESNO, Calif.—United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott and Special Agent-in-Charge Mark Wollman of U.S. Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE) announced today that a federal grand jury sitting in Fresno has returned an indictment against ADRIAN NEGRETE-HERNANDEZ, 42; JANET MARTINEZ, 19; ISMAEL CASAS, 21; MICHAEL RAMOS, 22; all of Terra Bella, Calif.; JUAN DELGADO-MONTENEGRO, 42, of Porterville, Calif.; AGEDA PEREZ, aka “Guerita,” of Lindsay, Calif.; OLEGARIO TRUJILLO, 22; LUIS CORTEZ-MENDOZA, 25, both of Tulare, Calif.; and ALEJANDRO MEJIA, 19, of Bakersfield, Calif.; charging them with participating in a long-term conspiracy to distribute and to possess with intent to distribute methamphetamine. PEDRO DELGADO-MONTENEGRO, 29, of Porterville, Calif., was also charged with being an illegal alien previously deported or removed from the United States when he appeared during a drug deal at a Home Depot parking lot that had been negotiated by his brother, JUAN DELGADO-MONTENEGRO.

These cases are the product of an Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) investigation that was led by the Southern Tri-County High-Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) task force. HIDTA is comprised of agents from ICE, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), California Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement (BNE), Kern County Sheriffs Office, Bakersfield Police Department, and Tulare County Sheriffs Office, with the assistance of deputies and agents from the U.S. Marshals Service, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF), Fresno Police Department, Tulare Police Department, and the Porterville Police Department.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Karen A. Escobar, who is prosecuting the cases, the two indictments stem from an intensive investigation that initially targeted JUAN DELGADO-MONTENEGRO, an illegal alien whose Porterville-based drug trafficking organization obtained drugs from Mexico and domestically. The investigation revealed that NEGRETE-HERNANDEZ was one of JUAN DELGADO-MONTENEGRO’s sources of drug supply.

Agents have arrested a total of 13 individuals, executed nine federal search warrants in the Porterville/Terra Bella areas and have seized more than 12 pounds of methamphetamine, approximately one kilogram of cocaine, and approximately \$51,938.

U.S. Attorney Scott stated, “As in many small, rural communities in this country, methamphetamine has taken hold of a number of residents of Porterville and Terra Bella. We applaud the federal, state and local agencies who united in this investigation to make a visible and real difference in these communities by dismantling the Delgado-Montenegro/Negrete drug trafficking organization based in Tulare County.”

“Methamphetamine is a vicious drug that destroys lives and ruins communities,” said David Marin, Resident Agent-in-Charge of ICE’s Office of Investigations in Bakersfield. “One of the keys to dismantling these operations is to follow the money trail because greed is what fuels this dangerous trade. By pooling our information and our resources, ICE and its law enforcement partners succeeded in dismantling a criminal organization that posed a serious threat to many communities.”

If convicted of the drug conspiracy charges, the defendants face a minimum prison sentence of 10 years, a maximum prison term of life, and a fine of \$4,000,000. PEDRO DELGADO-MONTENEGRO faces a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000. The actual sentences, however, will be determined at the discretion of the court after consideration of the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, which take into account a number of variables and any applicable statutory sentencing factors.

The defendants are next scheduled to appear in federal court on December 19, 2008 at 10:30 a.m. before the U.S. Magistrate Judge in Fresno.

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